



CONGRESSMAN CURT WELDON

*7th District Pennsylvania*



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**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE CURT WELDON (R-PA)  
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING ON HR 2786**

*November 5, 1997*

This afternoon, the Research and Development Subcommittee meets in open session to receive testimony on HR 2786, a bill to authorize actions to meet a rapidly emerging threat posed by the unexpectedly rapid development and impending deployment of medium range ballistic missiles in Iran.

I want to welcome our witness today, Lt. General Lester Lyles, the Director of the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization. General Lyles, thank you for appearing with us today. I know this came up on short notice, but we do appreciate your efforts on our behalf.

The subcommittee is deeply concerned over the rapid development of ballistic missiles by Iran, missiles which could be tested and potentially deployed within a year to eighteen months. Intelligence assessments don't normally assume that deployment of ballistic missiles can be accomplished soon after developmental testing. But we have already been caught by surprise with the totally unexpected deployment in North Korea of a significant number of No-dong missiles and both fixed site and mobile launchers after only limited evidence of testing. We can't afford to ignore this possibility again.

We are also greatly distressed to learn that Iranian missiles will be able to reach all of our troops in Turkey, the Middle East, and Persian Gulf, and all of our friends and allies in this region, including Israel. Another concern is that this missile threat may mature before any of our theater missile defense systems capable of meeting this threat effectively will be deployed. That means that we and our allies will face a period of vulnerability during which we will have no defense against these missiles. Yet another is that our current TMD planning and budgeting seems not to have anticipated the severity of this threat and the speed at which it has progressed. And finally, as we look into the future and see a still longer range Iranian threat evolving, we are concerned that US TMD systems such as THAAD and Navy Theater Wide will not progress at a pace that will allow us to defeat longer range Iranian missiles when those are deployed.

The bill that I and 106 cosponsors introduced, HR 2786, is intended to address this emerging threat with concrete steps that will allow us to deploy more effective defenses earlier. We discussed elements of this bill with BMDO, with industry representatives, and with our ally Israel, and we believe that we have put together a set of reasonable proposals that will, in fact, if implemented, enhance our ability to meet this challenge from Iran.

We directly requested that BMDO provide us with options that made sense from a programmatic and budgetary standpoint, and I know that BMDO was preparing information to support such options. However, very unfortunately in my view, the decision was taken, apparently at the highest levels of the Department of Defense, not to forward those options to the subcommittee. That made our task more difficult, and, General Lyles, makes your appearance before us today even more important.

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Secretary of Defense Cohen, in a letter to me addressing our request for information, indicated that “should such a [missile] capability emerge, it could pose a significant threat to US interests, military forces, and friends and allies in the region.” The subcommittee, however, is led to believe that this threat *will* arise, and sooner rather than later. General Lyles, we need from you today, as clear a sense as you can give us of the Department of Defense’s assessment of this threat, whether it was anticipated last winter when you put together your 1998 budget, and whether your program was adjusted during the spring and summer when awareness of this threat was growing. Secretary Cohen also wrote in his letter to me that he recommended “no additional resources be applied to accelerate” our TMD programs. We need to know if this statement represents DoD’s policy response to the Iranian missile threat.

We need also, General Lyles, your views on the specific authorizations we included in our bill, and the extent to which you think they will address both the near term and longer term threats the subcommittee believes will arise from the deployment of Iranian ballistic missiles. I want to thank you for your expressed willingness to be helpful at the beginning of the process of crafting this bill, and I apologize in advance for the awkwardness of your position here today. I can only note that this awkwardness results from the Department’s unwillingness to share with us information necessary to identify a meaningful response to this emerging threat.

